

FEMINA

LIBIDO SEXUALIS

COMPENDIUM OF THE PSYCHOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND
ANATOMY OF THE SEXUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMAN

BY HERMAN HEINRICH PLOSS,
MAX BARTELS and PAUL BARTELS

EDITED BY ERIC JOHN DINGWALL
ARRANGED BY J. R. BROSSLOWSKY

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different times. The vulva of a young girl differs from that after puberty. The vulva at menstruation in a nullipara differs from the vulva of gestation in a multipara. Here it will be convenient merely to give an outline sketch in order to stimulate interest in medical anthropologists and suggest lines of further observation and research.

The most important general characteristic is the *position* of the vulva. If an adult woman is placed in the supine position with legs extended and thighs together (cf. Fig. 5) the degree of visibility depends on the anterior or posterior position of the vulva. Generally speaking, in this position about one-third is visible. In girls before puberty this appearance is often mistaken for an unduly anterior position, as the vulva is more easily open to inspection owing to the lack of fatty development and hair on the mons and the manner in which the labia and clitoris often protrude (cf. Fig. 168).

If we take a normal young woman of average height and weight the following measurements were found by Jayle to approach a fair approximation. In the dorsal position the total length from the summit of the mons to the centre of the anus was 12 cm. From the anterior limit to the clitoris, 4 cm.; from clitoris to fourchette, 5 cm.; from fourchette to anus, 3 cm. When the vulva is placed in a more posterior position visibility in front decreases and the perineum is often found to be somewhat narrowed.

The main difference in the various types of normal vulva are brought about by coitus and child-bearing. In the nullipara who has not had sexual intercourse or indulges but infrequently, the vulva is more contracted and elastic; and the inner aspect can only be observed by separating the labia. In the multipara and in the vulva of age the parts are more open and lax, and the labia less resistant and elastic.

If, in the supine position, the legs are raised and the thighs separated, and either lightly flexed or strongly flexed on the abdomen the whole vulval and anal region becomes visible. Yet even in this position in the young nullipara the inner structures are not easily observable except by separating the labia. The difference between the two types is immediately apparent.

In woman the *pubic hair* does not attain full development till some considerable time has elapsed after the first menstruation. The character and distribution of the hair is quite different in various types, as might have been expected from a consideration of the pilous system generally. Thus the vulva and anus of the brunette differ from those of the blonde, not only in the amount and distribution of the pubic hair but in the pigmentation of the skin. On the mons the hair is usually curly or frizzly. Occasionally tufts are present; but in very fair women the amount of hair in this region and below appears extremely sparse. The distribution varies according to the general condition. In some the hair extends upward towards the navel, some authorities putting 5 per cent. as the average figure. In the posterior direction, especially in brunettes, the hair thickly surrounds the vulva, extends to the anal margins and may be even found in the termination of the intergluteal fold. Jayle, among others, considers this posterior growth around the anus as unusual and suggestive of pseudo-hermaphroditism, whilst Waldeyer considers it far from rare. Similarly, the anterior extension upwards towards the navel has caused differences of opinion, due probably to the fact that the disputants were unaware of the practice of brunettes to remove hair from the abdomen and also from elsewhere.

In colour, pubic hair is often darker than the hair of the head in blondes; lighter in brunettes. Red-haired women have red pubic hair, although the latter

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